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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 005622

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [CASC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: EMBASSY CAIRO'S EAC MEETS IN RESPONSE TO SHARM
EL-SHEIKH TERRORIST ATTACKS

REF: CAIRO 5619

Classified by Charge d'Affaires Stuart E. Jones for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) At an EAC meeting on the morning of July 23, Charge and Embassy officers reviewed the latest information on the terrorist attacks on Sharm el-Sheikh which occurred at 1:15 AM. Varying reports put the number of dead at 75-85, with at least 100 wounded. There are so far no reports of American deaths or injuries. The Embassy has dispatched a team of consular and security officers to Sharm and is working closely with GOE security contacts. An initial warden message was released and a more detailed follow up message will be issued later on July 23. The Embassy is also drafting suggested language for a Department public announcement. End summary.

2. (C) The Charge convened the Embassy's Emergency Action Committee (EAC) on July 23 at 11 AM local time to discuss the Mission's response to the terrorist attacks in the Sinai resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, which occurred at approximately 1:15 AM earlier the same day. A/DCM, RSO, ORA, LEGATT, CONS, ECPO, OMC, DAO, ADMIN, CLO, DEA, USAID, and RMO attended.

Initial Information

3. (C) The latest information on the attacks from Embassy contacts in the GOE's State Security Investigations Service (SSIS) put the number of casualties at 85 dead and more than 100 wounded, of whom 7 are currently thought to be foreign nationals. So far, there are no reports of death or injury to American citizens and no indications that a particular national group was targeted. An Egyptian Ministry of Tourism official has been quoted stating that 74 persons have been killed and that 20 foreign nationals are hospitalized with severe injuries. Of these, none are known to be American.

4. (C) There were apparently three explosions, reportedly including two vehicle-borne bombs, one in the "old market" area of Sharm el-Sheikh, and two in Na'ama Bay, the center of Sharm's night life, reportedly near the Ghazala Gardens Hotel. A third explosion in Na'ama Bay may have been an IED delivered by a pedestrian. One GOE security contact speculated that the perpetrators may have been "Al Qa'ida from Saudi Arabia." However, Minister of Interior Adly, in preliminary remarks to Arab journalists, linked the incident to the Taba bombing of October 2004.

5. (C) Initial media reports noted that the cars used in the attacks all had temporary plates issued by the Egyptian customs service at border crossings. Late-breaking media reports have carried claims of responsibility from "Al-Qa'ida of the Levant" and the "Abdallah Azzam Brigade." ORA chief noted that "Al Qa'ida of the Levant" typically claims responsibility for almost every act of terror in the region. The Charge and EAC members agreed that all of our information remains very preliminary and subject to change.

GOE Response

6. (C) President Mubarak, Interior Minister Adly, and Health Minister Tageldin traveled to Sharm el-Sheikh on the morning of July 23 to direct the GOE response. President Mubarak visited the injured in hospital late in the morning.

Embassy Actions

7. (C) Embassy officers were on duty within an hour of the attacks and issued an initial situation report (reftel). The Embassy issued an initial warden message to the American community at 7 AM local and is preparing a more detailed notice that will follow septel.

8. (C) EAC members noted that this was the fourth terrorist

incident targeting the tourist industry in nine months, including attacks at Taba and Nuweiba in October, 2004, an attack at the Khan el-Khalili tourist bazaar on April 7 and two incidents in central Cairo on April 30. EAC members agreed that the Sharm attack appeared to rise to a new level of operational sophistication.

9. (C) The EAC also discussed language for a forthcoming public announcement, and agreed that Americans should be cautioned to avoid areas frequented by foreign tourists. EAC members agreed, however, that absent more specific threat information, a travel warning would be inappropriate.

10. (C) An Embassy team composed of several RSO and consular officers departed Cairo at dawn and arrived in Sharm shortly before 11 AM local, where they linked up with A/LEGAT, who had been in Sharm on a personal visit. The team is liaising with GOE security contacts and providing assistance to American citizens. Specifically, the Embassy is arranging land transport for AMCITs who wish to leave Sharm. RSO, ORA, LEGAT, and DEA have each been in contact with their counterparts in GOE security services and have offered USG technical assistance and support to the investigation. GOE contacts undertook to pass the offer on to their superiors. (Note: We expect the GOE to decline offers of technical assistance. End note.)

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